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ABSTRACT

A descriptive study was conducted employing questionnaires distributed to users and staff members. The adequacy of informational and instructional staff performances, their attitude toward patrons, and the relative proportions of reference and nonreference questions were explored. It was recommended to the staff that methods of performance evaluation should be instituted and periodic self-evaluations should be undertaken, according to reference service standards set by the American Library Association. Questionnaires, an observation check list, the interview schedule, data summaries, and a policy statement are appended. (Author/DS)

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# EVALUATION OF SERVICE

at the

GENERAL REFERENCE DESK

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON LIBRARY

spring, 1975

Prepared by Wyma Jane Hood
and Monte James Gittings

For the Associated Students of the University of Oregon and the Student University Affairs Board

Under the auspices of the University Faculty-Student Library Committee

IR 002 310

To the staff of the General Reference Division, Main Library, University of Oregon, our thanks for their cooperation in our survey. We wish particularly to express our appreciation to Ray McCready for his efforts in behalf of the project.

We would also like to acknowledge the role of the School of Librarianship of the University of Oregon which provided the professional assistance of Dr. Perry D. Morrison, as well as computer time for the project.

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# INTRODUCTION

The University of Oregon Main Library is organized by divisions. On the first floor, east side is education-psychology. On the second floor lie the social sciences and government documents divisions. On the third floor, the humanities. There are separate facilities for the science library, the art and architecture library, and the law library. On the west side of the first floor of the main library hulks the card catalog, key to all the libraries, in author, title and subject form. Fronting the card catalog is a knee-high counter, stretching its wood-grain formica across 15 1/2 feet of floor space. This counter is known as the General Reference Desk (GRD). Behind the counter are books and other items used to provide the patron with information on the widest variety of subjects. Around the GRD are book stacks filled with indexes, encyclopedias, catalogs, atlases and other guides to information. This is the most trafficked section of the library: students, professors and townspeople come here looking for the answer to a question, the location of a book, or information on a subject. Five professional librarians and many students are employed by the University of Oregon Library to aid the patron in finding the information he needs. When a staff member so aids a patron, he is extending to the patron reference service.

The purpose of this study is to determine the kinds and amount of reference service provided by the GRD. We hope to evaluate the level

of service provided and to make suggestions for improving service in any area in which it may be found to be lacking.

The study was conceived as a means of evaluating the level of reference service offered to users of libraries at the University. It was necessary to limit the scope of the study because of the short time available, only two quarter-semesters. Only two students were available to carry out the study; thus, the amount of surveying was reduced. The study was further limited by negotiation with the staff of the GRD. Since the staff refused to be evaluated by anyone other than their professional peers, some methods of gathering data were closed to the student surveyors.

The GRD was chosen for study because of its appeal to a broad spectrum of the University population. The appeal lies, we feel, in its function as a center for general questions, and in its convenient first floor location. Furthermore, we feel that the GRD is the area most likely to be used by the largest number of undergraduate students.

The working hypothesis is that the staff of the GRD adequately performs its job of teaching the patron how to find the answer to his question as well as adequately performs its job of locating the information the patron needs. Other related hypotheses are that the staff maintain a friendly and helpful attitude toward patrons of the desk, and that the staff answer a high proportion of directional and retrieval questions and a low proportion of reference or research requests.

## LITERATURE SURVEY

A survey of the literature of reference evaluations and measurements reveals that professional librarians have accepted no standards for evaluation of reference service. There is little replication of reference

surveys performed. Reference departments, while generally required to keep some statistical measurements, are not much involved in evaluating the service they offer.

The American Library Association (ALA) Standards Committee of the Reference and Adult Services Division, has been working for 10 years to spell out standards for reference service acceptable by academic, public and special libraries. In March of 1975, the committee published, rather than standards, a draft of guidelines for service.[1] It is still up to the individual reference department and to individual surveyors to set up their own standards by which the service is to be evaluated.

The kinds of reference surveys performed in the past ten years which form a background for the present study are classed by Terry Weech in a survey of the field for Library Trends as 1) "enumeration and classification of reference questions," 2) "analysis of reference clientele," and 3) "standards of reference service."[2] Weech's survey itself formed a basis for our reading and will be referred to frequently.

Hieber's 1972 study of the LeHigh University Library, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, uses the concept of classifying the types of answers rather than the questions themselves.[3] This seems to be the better approach since it takes into account directly what the librarian does in response to the question. Although we did not use the classifications named by Hieber, we did classify questions by the librarian's response.

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[1] Ruth White, et al., A Committment to Information Services: Developmental Guidelines. Standards Committee, Reference and Adult Services Division, ALA, March 1, 1975. (See Appendix C-7.)

[2] Terry L. Weech, "Evaluation of Adult Reference Service." Library Trends, pp. 315-335 (January, 1974).

[3] Terry L. Weech, p. 318.

Several studies analyzing reference clientele have been performed since 1964. Two of them deal with academic libraries. Ruth White's study of reference service in Atlanta includes academic, public and special library users.[4] A Brown University Library survey shows that 46% of reference users were humanities majors although they made up only 32% of the student body.[5]

We have gathered demographic data on reference users that can show which groups, by academic standing, age, subject major, or nationality, make up the largest proportion of users.

Under standards for reference service, we note White's Atlanta study which was designed to lead to the development of standards for reference service. However, as mentioned above, this study and others resulted in the formulation of guidelines for service rather than standards for evaluation.[6]

The British Standards for Reference Services in Public Libraries was adopted in 1969. These standards which were formulated following a user survey, deal with the reference collection, organization, facilities, and staff.[7] Since a university reference department would differ from a public library reference department in all of these areas, we could not utilize these standards of measurement. However, after examining them,

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[4] Ruth White, ed, A Study of Reference Services and Reference Users in the Metropolitan Atlanta Area. U. of Georgia, Dept. Library Ed., 1971. ERIC: ED #058 912.

[5] Terry L. Weech, p. 321.

[6] Ruth White, Study, p. 1.

[7] "Standards for Reference Services in Public Libraries." Library Association Record, pp. 53-57 (February, 1970).

we think it reasonable to assume that formulation of standards for a university general reference collection is a practicable task. The best kinds of organization could be described. The staff per number of students would depend in some part on the organization of the rest of the library, and the optimum might be more difficult to define. The facilities would also be limited to some extent by the facilities of the university library itself.

Since such standards are unavailable, the present study concerns itself with user satisfaction, user analysis, and a description of the amount and kinds of reference service provided.

Two research possibilities intriguing to the present surveyors are the analysis of library users who have, but do not ask, reference questions, to determine why they do not ask questions, and the unobtrusive measurement of reference service.

The Jahoda and Culnan study of unanswered reference questions suggests that unasked rather than unanswered questions be analyzed.[8] This approach was the basis of Swope and Katzer's study conducted at Syracuse University in 1972. They interviewed library users to determine who had reference questions. Of those identified as having questions, 65% would not ask for help. The reasons given most often were: that their questions were too simple; that they did not want to bother the librarians; and, that they had had prior unsatisfactory experiences with reference encounters.[9]

Although the results of this survey are meaningful, the method of collecting data, that is, interviewing users until they had a fixed

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[8] G. Jahoda and Mary Culnan, "Unanswered Science and Technology Reference Questions." American Documentation, p. 97 (Jan., 1968).

[9] Mary Jane Swope and Jeffrey Katzer, "The Silent Majority: Why Don't They Ask Questions?" RQ, p. 164 (winter, 1972).

number of them who had reference questions, is not desirable. A random sample of hours for interviews of a sufficient number of users to obtain data on a useable number of patrons with reference questions would take more time than we could devote to the present survey. Furthermore, the surveyors feel that interviews of such a sensitive nature should be conducted by someone trained in social science interview techniques. Thus, this approach was ruled out by the limitations of time and personnel.

The second approach offering telling results is that of unobtrusive observation. Sample questions are usually asked by trained patron-substitutes who rate the librarians' responses as well as the accuracy of the answers. This approach precludes the problem of the librarian's response being altered because of an awareness that he is being observed. The most familiar study using such a technique is Lowell Martin's study of the Chicago Public Library.[10] As Weech points out, the problem with this type of research is the possible adverse affect on the staff being tested.[11] In the present study, the reference staff rejected out of hand any evaluation by the surveyors of question answering technique, attitude toward patron, and efficiency and accuracy.

Methods used in this study include a survey of users and observation of service at the GRD, as well as an interview with the chairman of the reference department based on the draft of the ALA guidelines for reference service. The survey of users was conducted through a questionnaire soliciting responses on user information needs and experiences. The questionnaire was distributed to users over a six day period, during hours selected to represent regular hours the library is open.

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[10] Lowell Martin, Library Response to Urban Change: A Study of the Chicago Public Library (ALA, 1969).

[11] Terry Weech, p. 329.

The observation of activities at the GRD took place during the same selected hours in another six day time span. At the end of each observation period, the librarians on duty were interviewed for their subjective evaluations of reference desk encounters of the preceding time period.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Although initially more discrete classifications of questions were used, for the observation we grouped data into information on two kinds of questions. We call these two categories reference and directional. Reference questions include all those which result in the librarian finding information on a subject, instructing the patron in finding such information, going with the patron to find the information, and explaining library policy. Directional questions include those which result in the librarian retrieving a specifically requested item from the GRD collection, directing the patron to a location in the library or another source on campus, and referring the patron to some other source for information. In the questionnaire we ask the patron to tell us the substance of his question. These answers are coded reference, directional and policy, by the same criteria noted above, except that policy questions are considered separately.

A user, or patron, is defined for the purposes of this study as anyone who consulted the GRD during the hours in which the questionnaire was distributed or when the observation took place. The staff of the GRD includes all professional librarians, work study students, and librarianship practicum students who work at the GRD and who were involved in reference encounters during the two weeks of the study.

The GRD is the administrative division of the University of Oregon Library known as the General Reference Division or the General Reference Desk, located on the first floor in the Main Library.

A reference encounter is any encounter between the staff of the GRD and any library user which was not: 1) exclusively personal in nature, 2) a user returning material borrowed from the GRD at an earlier time, 3) a consultation with other library staff about some internal matter (Staff requests for information were considered reference encounters.), or 4) a question concerning course work from students enrolled in Lib 127, Use of the Library, a course for undergraduates taught by a member of the GRD staff.

## HISTORY

The reference survey was conducted by Gittings and Hood, student members of the University Faculty-Student Library Committee, under the sponsorship of that committee. The project was funded by the Student University Affairs Board, an organ of the Associated Students of the University of Oregon. The preliminary literature search and planning, as well as the survey itself, were carried out under the supervision of Dr. Perry D. Morrison, professor of librarianship at the University of Oregon, and instructor for the class, Research in Librarianship.

After reviewing the literature of reference evaluation and conferring with the GRD staff, we selected two principal means of data collection: a survey of users through a questionnaire, and observation of activities at the GRD recorded by the surveyors.

The questionnaire was developed to gather data about the kinds of questions asked, staff responses to kinds of questions asked, and the level of user satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the reference service.

Information solicited about the user himself included demographic data, mood, and reaction to several aspects of his reference experience.

The questionnaire was submitted to review by the GRD staff as well as the class of Research in Librarianship, which consisted of seven graduate students in library science, engaged in various research projects. After comments and suggestions had been considered, and incorporated or discarded, a pre-test was performed on April 28, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Questionnaires were given to 50 people who approached the GRD during the two hour span. Both the pre-test and the final form of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

For the observation a checklist was contrived to facilitate the recording of each encounter. The surveyors submitted the checklist to review by the GRD staff and the Research in Librarianship class. Preliminary tests of the checklist were performed on March 6, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., and March 12, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Many changes were made as the surveyors noted what could be observed and recorded. Since recording each single encounter required the presence of two observers, we decided to limit the observation to simple counting of the number of times particular items occurred during the two hours. Each question from a user was noted as either reference or directional. The final form of the checklist appears as Appendix B.

When the preliminary proposal with questionnaire and checklist were ready, they were filed with the University Subcommittee for the Protection of the Rights of Human Subjects. Possible harm to the subjects as well as safeguards employed against such harm are detailed in the form submitted to the Subcommittee.

The draft of the guidelines for reference service prepared by the Standards Committee of the Reference and Adult Services Division of ALA was received in April. On April 28, the chairman of the GRD staff was interviewed on specific points in the guidelines. Since the reference staff has a General Reference Division Policy Statement on Reference included in their staff manual, it was necessary to interview the chairman only on points not covered therein. The GRD Policy Statement, notes from the interview, and the draft of the ALA Reference Service Guidelines appear in Appendix C.

From the interview we learned that the GRD has no formal review process. For feedback on service it depends upon the suggestion box used for general library recommendations and complaints. The GRD does not solicit user statistics. They do keep statistics on the number of searches of 15 minutes or more conducted in response to questions, and on the number of books retrieved from behind the desk. However, the staff does not feel that these particular statistics are of great use to them.[12] For example, when they are organizing staffing patterns, they will keep more precise statistics for a short time, make changes as needed, and drop the extensive recording of statistics when they are satisfied with the changes.

## METHODS

For examining the hypotheses of this study, hours for the distribution of the questionnaire and the recording of observations were established to represent the days and hours that the library is open, to include hours of heavy, average and light use, and to avoid exclusive

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[12] Terry Weech notes that studies have shown that few academic reference departments keep extensive statistics. Those who do keep them consider them to be of little value. The Atlanta study by White found this to be true, also. Yet, the guidelines drafted on the basis of the White study calls for collection of statistical data by reference departments. More explicit guidelines for specified statistics and their uses in evaluation are needed.

coverage of a single staff member. The hours determined were Sunday - 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., Monday - 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Tuesday - 10:00 to 12:00 noon, Wednesday - 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., Thursday - 8:00 to 10:00 p.m., and Friday - 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. The questionnaire was distributed the week of May 4 - 10; the observations took place during the same hours the week of May 18 - 23.

All patrons involved in reference encounters, a total of 219, were solicited to respond to the questionnaire. The number of questionnaires actually given out were 202, 167 responded for a total return of 76%. Those returning to the GRD for another question or more information in the same time block were not requested to fill out a second questionnaire. Although it would have been desirable for them to do so, we felt it would be presuming upon their time and good will to such an extent that ill feeling toward the survey or even the reference desk could result. Patrons who used the reference desk in more than one time block were asked to fill out a questionnaire for each time block.

For the observations, each observer took three blocks of time: Observer 1 taking Sunday, Tuesday and Friday; Observer 2, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

## EXAMINATION OF HYPOTHESES

The hypothesis that the staff at the GRD adequately performs its task of teaching the patron how to find the answer to his question was tested by questions #9 and #10 of the questionnaire.

In answer to "What did the librarian do in response to your question?" 40 out of 167 indicated that the librarian showed them how to find the answer. We crosstabulated this response with our classification of questions as stated by the users in answer to #8, part 2, "What was the substance of your request?" We found that the user checked that the staff member showed him how to find the answer to directional questions

15.5% of the time; to reference questions, 46.3% of the time; and to questions of library policy, 28.6% of the time. (See figure 1.)

In the first part of #8, the patron was asked to classify his question by checking one of four items. From a crosstabulation of these responses with those from question #9, we found that when the patron checked that he had asked for information on a subject, he also checked that he was shown how to find the answer 48.3% of the time. When he wanted to locate a book, he checked that he was shown how to find the answer 28.8% of the time.

Evaluating the hypothesis on the basis of user response to #9 alone would give the staff less than a 50% rating for teaching the patron how to find the answer to his question when it was a reference question. However, examination of responses to question #10, allows a different interpretation.

Respondents answering yes to question #10, "Would you be able to answer a similar question for yourself next time?" totaled 121 out of 152 responding to this question, or 79.6%. Of the remaining 20.4% who checked no or undecided, none of them indicated that the reason was, "I did not learn how to use the source(s) consulted." In many of these cases the request was for a book from behind the desk, and thus, the patron would have to ask for the book each time he wanted to use it.

The hypothesis that the staff at the GRD adequately performs its job of locating the information the patron needs was difficult to test through the means available to us. A better test of the staff's performance in finding information would require unobtrusive measurement by unidentified, trained persons asking questions for which acceptable answers and reliable sources were predetermined. Since we could not determine through our observations the substance of the questions asked, we could not verify even a small sample of the answers.

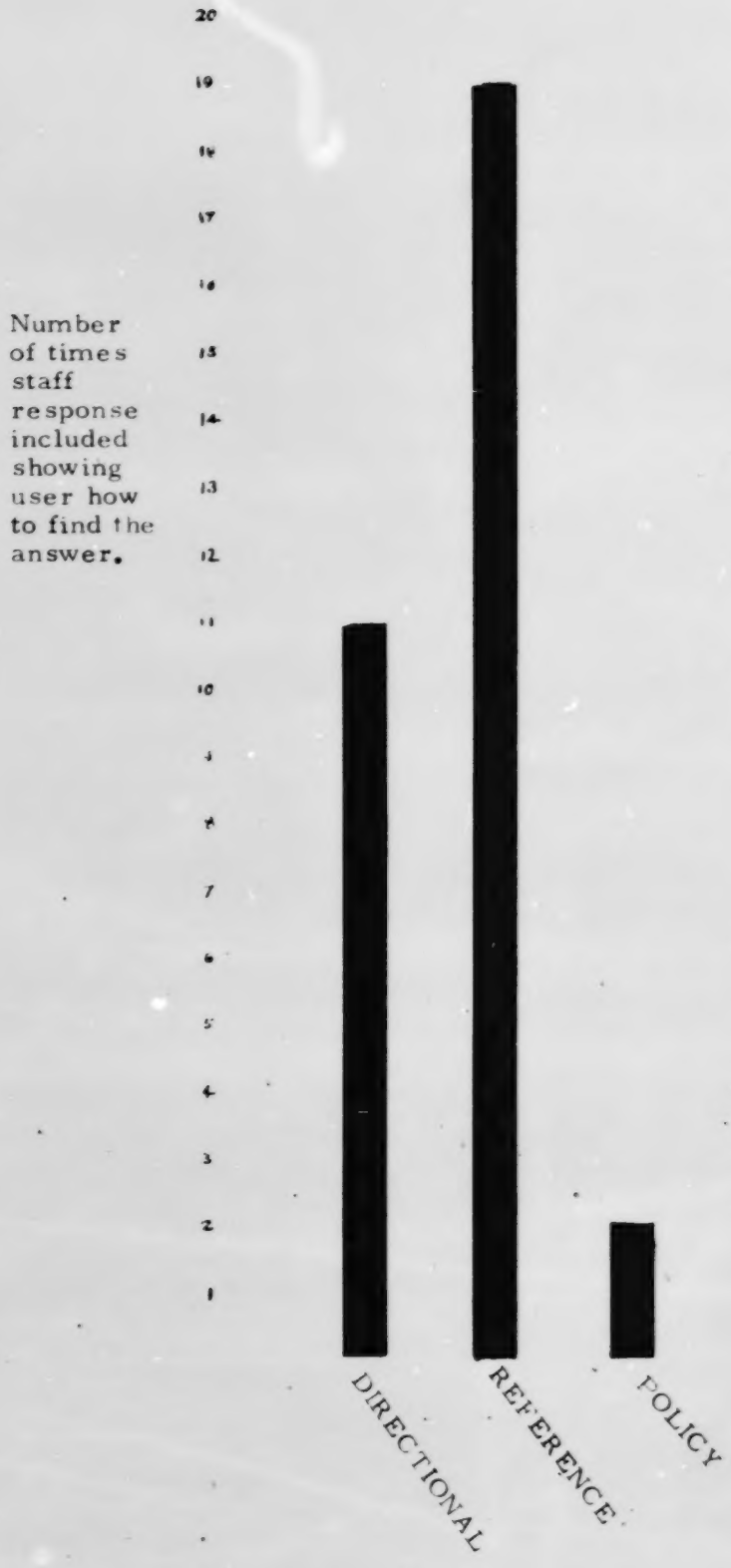
Number of times staff response included showing user how to find the answer.
20
19
18
17
16
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
DIRECTIONAL
REFERENCE
POLICY
KINDS OF QUESTIONS

Fig. 1

The only indication we could have of the level of the staff's performance was the user's satisfaction with the response to his question. We solicited this information in question #12 of the questionnaire. In answer to "My question was answered to my complete satisfaction - complete dissatisfaction," the respondent was asked to circle the most appropriate number on a scale of 5 to 1 for descending satisfaction.

There were 164 responses to this question. The percentages were as follows: 5 (complete satisfaction) = 79.9%, 4 = 12.8%, 3 = 6.1%, 2 = 0.0%, and 1 (complete dissatisfaction) = 1.2%. The mean level of satisfaction was 4.7, with a standard deviation of .7. (See figure 2.) Users indicate a very high performance on the part of the staff. Over 90% of those responding rated their satisfaction as above average. This result coincides with that of other studies which show that user satisfaction is usually high, around 90%.[13]

That the staff maintains a friendly, helping attitude toward patrons was tested in two ways. We determined that if the staff initiated the reference encounter we would interpret this as a helping attitude. Our checklist for observation included the two categories, "Staff initiates encounter," and "Patron initiates encounter." Out of 313 encounters observed, the staff initiated 62.3% of them. (See Summary of Observations, Appendix D.)

While this measurement would rate the staff as having a helping attitude only somewhat better than half the time, we must acknowledge that the staff's readiness to respond to the patron's initiation is representative of a helping attitude. Since we could not tabulate the number of times the staff responded readily without calling for a judgment on our

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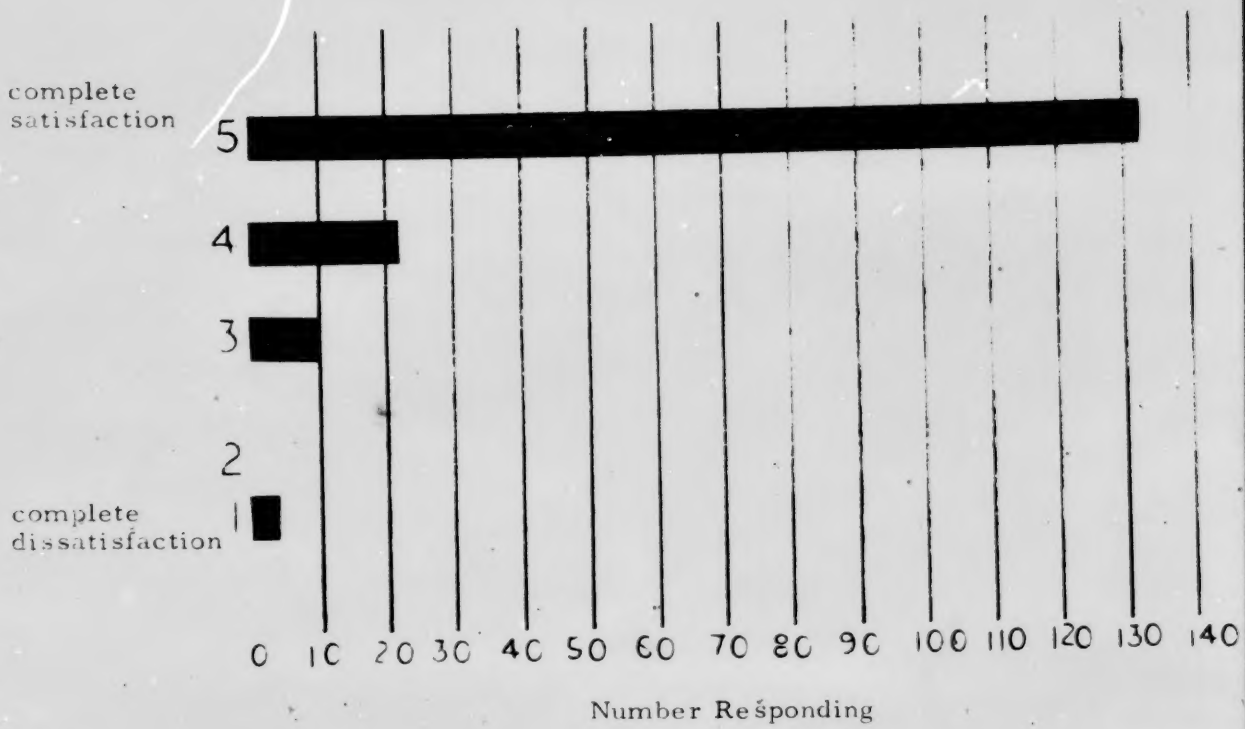
[13] Terry L. Weech, p. 316.

USER'S SATISFACTION

with

STAFF PERFORMANCE




N = 164

Fig. 2

part about the staff's behavior, we determined to measure the number of times that the staff was not responding readily. On our checklist we noted the number of times a patron had to wait to ask his question because the staff was "busy." The staff's being busy included doing anything other than research away from the reference desk or helping another user. We observed that this situation happened only 23 times, or 7.3% of the time. We can then assume that the staff responded readily the rest of the time, except when necessity (when staff was not at the desk or was helping another user) prevented such a response.

We would have liked to have the user rate the staff for friendliness. Since the General Reference staff objected to this on the grounds that we would then be measuring librarians rather than service, we attempted to get at this measurement in another way. On the questionnaire we asked in #13 if the user would return to the GRD for information in the future. If he answered yes, he was given three items to check as to why. A total of 159 said that they would return. Of these, 48, or 30.2%, checked, "It was a pleasant experience." This evidence is not conclusive since it might have been a pleasant experience in other cases in which, however, it was not the pleasantness of the experience which would cause the users to return.

Another effort at measuring the staff's attitude by gauging its affect on the user's experience was an attempt to detect any change in the user's mood after the encounter. Question #14 asked the respondent to rate his mood before he came to the library on a scale of 5 to 1. with 5 as good and 1 as bad. This question prepared the user for the next one which asked, "How was your mood changed as a result of your experience at the GRD?" Out of 161 respondents to this question, the majority, or 66.5%, indicated no change. Those indicating a change for the better were 28.4%; for the worse, 5%.

The mood after the reference encounter was crosstabulated with #12, the degree of satisfaction to which the patron's question was answered. Since a change of mood for the better correlates significantly with a high satisfaction (4 or 5), it seems likely that the change of mood may have been due to the performance, rather than the attitude of the staff toward the patron. (See figure 3.)

Our attempts to measure the staff's friendliness from the patron's viewpoint failed to provide conclusive data.

We hypothesized that the staff answers a high proportion of directional questions and a limited number of reference questions. We measured this in three ways. The questionnaire asked for the substance of the question. We gave the question a reference, directional or policy rating from the information provided us by the user. Out of 119 responses, 59.7% were deemed directional questions and 40.3% reference and policy.

In keeping with the idea of classifying the question by the librarian's response, we have in question #9 seven responses, three of which would be directional and four of which would indicate reference. Retrieving a book or other material, telling the patron where to look, and referring him to another source are deemed directional responses. Going with the patron, showing him how to find the answer, finding the answer for him, and explaining library policy are deemed reference responses. By combining the responses as indicated and placing the "other" responses in the most appropriate categories, we get 56.8% directional responses and 43.2% reference responses.

Our observation checklist had two items, "Appears to be a reference question," and "Appears to be a directional question." We based our judgment on the librarian's response. Out of 332 questions,

MOOD AFTER REFERENCE

ENCOUNTER

| SATISFACTION RATING | Count / Row % / Column % / Total % | change for worse | no change | change for better | Row Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rating 1 & 2 (1 = complete dissatisfaction) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | | 50.0 | 0.0 | 50.0 | 1.3 |
| | | 14.3 | 0.0 | 2.2 | |
| | | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.6 | |
| | Rating 3 (Neutral) | 2 | 6 | 2 | 10 |
| | | 20.0 | 60.0 | 20.0 | 6.3 |
| | | 28.6 | 5.7 | 4.3 | |
| | | 1.3 | 3.8 | 1.3 | |
| | Rating 4 & 5 (5 = complete satisfaction) | 4 | 99 | 43 | 146 |
| | | 2.7 | 67.8 | 29.5 | 92.4 |
| | | 57.1 | 94.3 | 93.5 | |
| | | 2.5 | 62.7 | 27.2 | |
| | Column Total | 7 | 105 | 46 | 158 |
| | | 4.4 | 66.5 | 29.1 | 100.0 |

Significance = 0.0013 X

Contingency coefficient = 0.31828

Figure 1

the staff's response indicated reference questions as 44.9% and directional, 55.1%. The percentages of reference and directional responses are similar in all three measurements. We accept our observation measurement as the most accurate, because the surveyors are doing the classifying on the spot and the sample is the largest of the three.

Besides testing the four hypotheses the surveyors hoped to validate some assumptions they had about reference service in the library and to gather data to describe the interrelationship of various aspects of the reference encounter and the user's initial mood, mood after the encounter, and his satisfaction with the answer obtained. Also, we wanted to be able to describe what the librarians did in response to different kinds of questions, and to characterize through demographic data, the reference user. One last objective was to ascertain the awareness of the reference user of other reference services such as the Oregonian index, the collection of national and international telephone directories, the college catalog collection, and reference service by telephone.

By asking on the questionnaire and checking during the observation, the number of users who had to stand in line, we had hoped to be able to ascertain times when more staff was needed. From the questionnaire data, we crosstabulated the time slots by those who checked that they had to stand in line. The results show more standing in line during the two evenings, by more than twice as many as the other time slots. This comparison is significant to 0.0573 $X^2$, with a contingency coefficient of 0.24767. However, our observation week gives us a different picture. During this week, more users waited in line the first part of the week, no matter what the time of day. (See a comparison of the results below

in figure 4.) We conclude that either the sample of time slots was too small to allow time slots that need more staff to consistently show up, or that the reference desk is adequately staffed at all times.

| Time Slots | Week of May 4-9 | | Week of May 18-23 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| Sunday, 3-5 p.m. | 4 | 10.5 | 22 | 37.9 |
| Monday, 6-8 p.m. | 9 | 31.0 | 20 | 40.8 |
| Tuesday, 10-12 noon | 3 | 14.3 | 20 | 29.0 |
| Wednesday, 1-3 p.m. | 4 | 10.8 | 13 | 18.0 |
| Thursday, 8-10 p.m. | 9 | 29.0 | 6 | 13.6 |
| Friday, 8-10 a.m. | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 23.8 |

Users Who Waited in Line Before Asking Questions

Figure 4

Among the affects of the user's mood on the other aspects of the encounter, we examined the ability of the patron to answer a similar question next time (#10), as compared with the user's initial mood (#14). An association was discovered between the user's good mood and his self-assessed ability to answer a similar question next time. Users in an initially bad mood were able to answer a similar question next time 53.8% of the time. Those in a neutral mood could answer a similar question next time 84.0% of the time. Users in an initially good mood thought that they could answer a similar question next time at a rate of 81.0%.

We also compared the user's satisfaction rating with whether or not he had to stand in line, and with whether or not he would return to the reference desk for help another time. The comparison of those standing in line and user's satisfaction rating is not significant, due to the high proportion of satisfaction at the 4 and 5 level, and the low proportion of those who did have to stand in line. However, of those 28 who checked that they had to stand in line, we note that all gave satisfaction ratings or 4 or 5.

A similar problem occurred with the comparison of the patron's willingness to return with his satisfaction rating. Again, the high rate of those responding that they would return and the high satisfaction rate ruled out any significant comparison from our data. Nevertheless, we note that of the six who said that they would not return for help in the future, all gave satisfaction ratings of 4 or 5.

What the librarian did in response to different kinds of questions is of interest. We examined comparisons of our classification of the patron's question by the patron's answer as to what the librarian did in response to his question. We also examined a comparison of the patron's classification of his question to what the librarian did. We considered the request for information on a subject to be a reference question, and the requests for a book, or for a location of a facility or a specific book, to be directional questions. Those comparisons of significance of .05 $X^2$ or less are shown in the graphs in figures 5, 6, and 7.

The response to reference questions tended to be that staff members went with the patrons and showed them how to find the answer: Figure 5, with statistics for the surveyors' classification of questions, shows that 53.7% of the time the staff went with the patrons; 46.3% of the time they showed patrons how to find the answer. A third, 34.1%, of the time they found the answer for the user. In figures 6 and 7, by the patron's classification of his question, we note that 48.3% of the time the staff showed the patron how to find the answer to a request for information on a subject. In response to the same request, the librarian went with the patron 55.2% of the time, and found the answer for him 27.6% of the time.

A measurement of a reference department's effectiveness is its development of aids to the user and its ability to make the user aware of its aids and resources. At the end of our questionnaire we asked respondents

HOW THE STAFF RESPONDED

to directional, reference, and policy questions

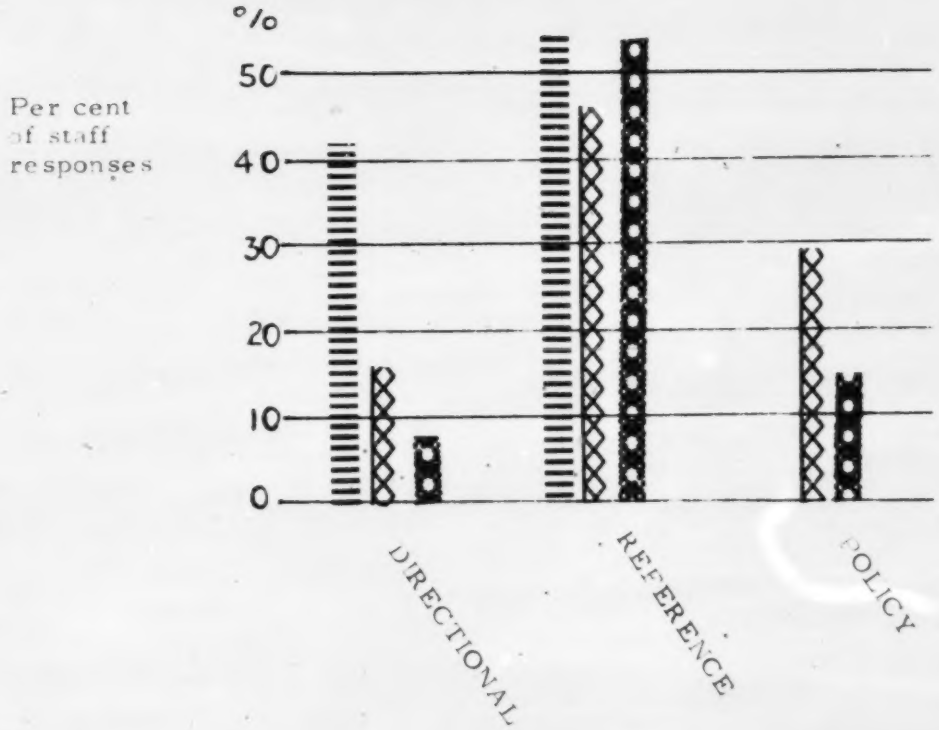



Fig. 5

Staff told user where to look.

Staff showed user how to use source.

Staff went with patron to find information.

Significance = $< .051\ X^2$

Contingency coefficient = $> 0.2$

HOW THE STAFF RESPONDED

to various requests

with directional answers

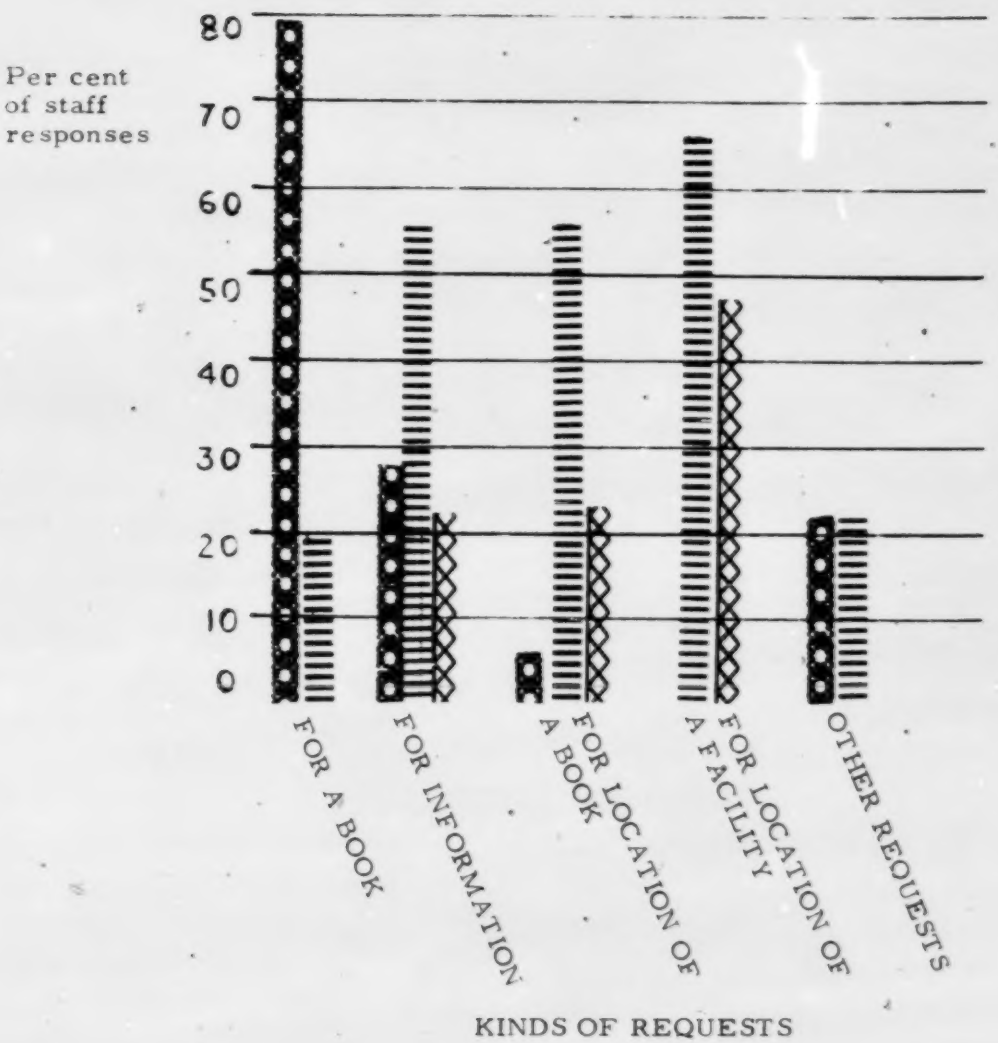



Fig. 6

HOW THE STAFF RESPONDED

to various requests

with reference answers

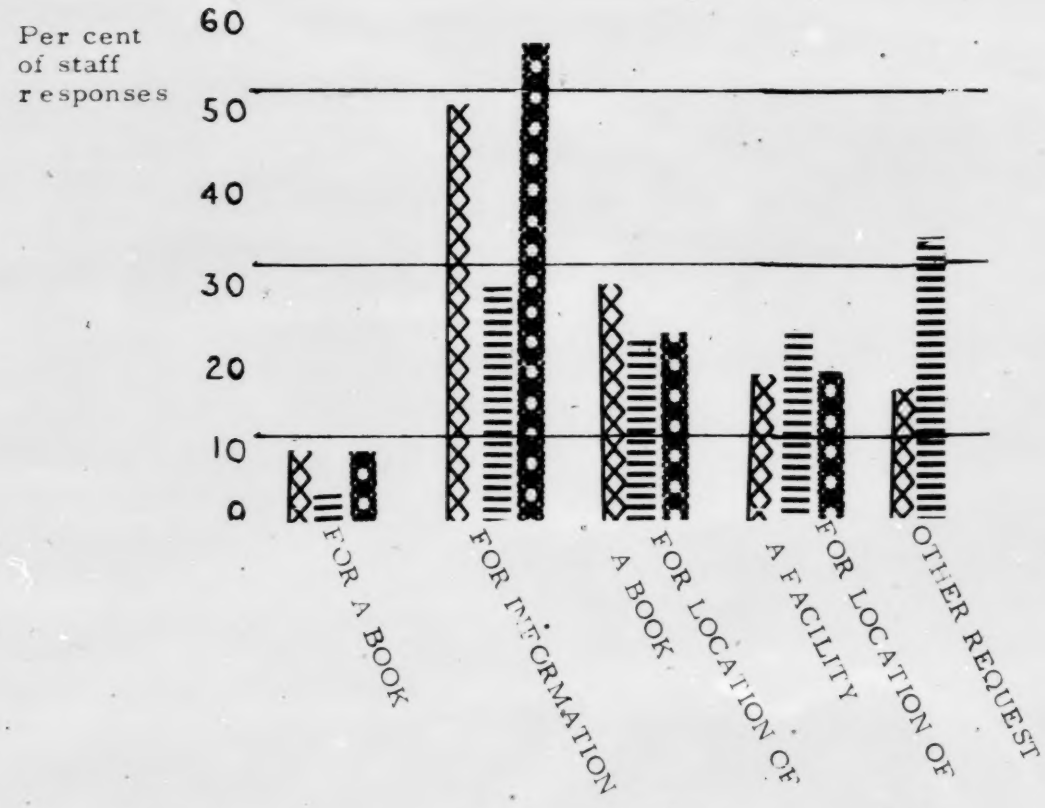



Fig. 7

to check the four special services as to whether or not they knew of the service, and whether or not they used it. Their responses are tabulated in figure 8, below. If they used the source, we assumed they knew of it, but counted them only under usage. To get the total who knew of a service, it is necessary to add together the second and third columns.

| Special Service or Source | Not aware of | Knew of | Used |
|---|---|---|---|
| Telephone reference | 114 (68.3%) | 35 (21.0%) | 18 (10.8%) |
| Oregonian index | 110 (65.9%) | 42 (25.1%) | 15 (9.0%) |
| Telephone directories | 76 (45.5%) | 49 (29.3%) | 42 (25.1%) |
| College catalogs | 52 (31.1%) | 54 (32.3%) | 61 (36.5%) |

Users' Awareness of Special Sources and Services of GRD

Fig. 8

## DEFENSE OF HYPOTHESES

We conclude, on the basis of the patron's estimate of his ability to answer a similar question next time, at a rate of 79.6% with 152 responding, that the staff of the GRD adequately performs its task of teaching the patron how to find the answer to his question. We feel that his self-assessed ability to answer a similar question next time is a measure of what he learned, and, by inference, of what he was taught. Our acceptance of 79.6% of the time as adequate is purely arbitrary, since we know of no standard for this measurement.

We can conclude that the user is generally satisfied with the performance of the GRD. Those giving satisfaction ratings above 3, the mid point in the scale, were 92.7% of the respondents. We do not feel that this is a valid test of our hypothesis, that the GRD adequately performs its job of locating the information the patron needs; however, it is an important aspect of the adequacy of the staff's performance.

The staff's attitude toward patrons was tested for both helpfulness and friendliness. The staff's helping attitude, as determined by his readiness to initiate or respond to encounters with users, we conclude to be high. The staff initiated 62.3% of the encounters. We have assumed that they either initiated or responded readily to the users in each case not noted as one in which the patron had to wait because the staff was busy. According to our observations, this would indicate that the staff has a helping attitude 92.7% of the time.

Our attempts to measure the staff's friendliness failed to produce useful evidence because of the ineptitude of the testing instrument. The questions in the user survey relating to friendliness solicited answers for which the causes might have been factors other than the friendliness or lack of it on the part of the GRD staff.

The reference desk handles more directional questions than reference questions at an approximate rate of 55 to 45. The two classifications of questions are based on the observation of staff responses to the questions.

## ERRORS IN VALIDITY

The methods chosen for this survey involve possible errors in validity. For the observations of service, each surveyor took three 2 hour slots. Although definitions of terms and methods of notation were agreed upon, it is possible that the observers differed somewhat in their interpretations of what they saw. Also, the observers were subject to changes of mood and well being from one day to the next. These changes might have affected their recording of events.

From the number of encounters during the two hour spans of our preliminary observations and the pre-test of the questionnaire, we expected a two hour span to average 40 to 50 encounters. The week in which the

questionnaires were given out, encounters for six 2 hour spans totaled 219, or an average of 36 per time slot. The week of observation the encounters totaled 313, less the 36 encounters which were patrons returning for help in the same time slot (Patrons returning during the same time slot were not counted for the questionnaire.), for 277 encounters, or an average of 46 per time slot. Although we did select more or less neutral weeks, that is, avoiding mid-term examinations, dead week, and the first or last week of a term, it is impossible to say that either week is a representative week. Also, there is the fact that a survey conducted during only one quarter-semester runs the risk of not being representative of the whole year.

Finally, we note the possibility of the Hawthorne effect upon the GRD staff. Knowledge that they were being studied, indeed the obvious presence of the surveyors both as solicitors of respondents to their questionnaire, and as observers, might have affected staff responses to patrons. It would be natural for the staff to put their best foot forward when being observed. Thus, the results may be more positive in terms of user satisfaction and staff response than they would be if it were possible to gather such data unobtrusively.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the GRD set up standards for evaluation and engage in regular, periodic self evaluation. Noting that the General Reference Division Policy Statement on Reference Service (Appendix C) details their goals in service, we recommend that they devise means of evaluating their achievement in meeting these goals. (Our first three hypotheses were taken directly from the Policy Statement.) Further, we recommend that these periodic evaluations include, in accordance

with the Developmental Guidelines, points 1.2 and 1.4 (Appendix, C-10) the effort to reach the nonuser of reference service and provision for feedback from reference users.

Further research in the field should be directed toward generating standards for evaluation for individual library reference departments as well as national standards specifically applicable to public, special or academic reference departments. Standards for evaluation are, of themselves, useless; but, we believe that the regular application of measurement against the library's efforts ultimately brings the best possible service to the user.

# SURVEY OF PATRONS USING THE GENERAL REFERENCE DESK

A survey of services at the General Reference Desk of the University of Oregon Library is being conducted under the auspices of the University Faculty-Student Library Committee and with the permission of the General Reference Division staff. You have just consulted the General Reference Desk (1st floor). Would you answer the questions below on your experience. Please check the appropriate spaces and place the completed form in the boxes at the circulation desk or at the reference desk as you leave the library.

If you have a question concerning any of the items, please feel free to ask me about it. If you would like to see a copy of the results of this survey, please leave your name, address, and phone number on a separate sheet of paper in one of the boxes at the circulation or reference desk. All responses are completely anonymous.

1. I am (Check one)

U of O Freshman _____
U of O Sophomore _____
U of O Junior _____
U of O Senior _____
U of O Grad Student _____

U of O Faculty _____
U of O Staff _____
Non UO Student _____
Non UO Faculty _____
Town Patron _____
Other (Please specify.) _____

_____

2. My major is _____

_____.

3. I am (Check one) male _____
female _____

4. I have attended school (grade school, high school, vocational, and college) for a total of (Check one.)

0-12 years _____
13-16 years _____
17-20 years _____
21-24 years _____
25+ years _____

5. I am (Check one.)

U.S. citizen _____
Other _____
(Please specify:

_____

6. My year of birth is _____.

7. Is this the first time that you have consulted the General Reference Desk?

no _____
yes _____

If yes, what directed you to consult it today? (Check all that apply.)

I read the signs above the desk. _____
I saw the staff behind the desk. _____
I saw people in line at the desk. _____
I knew about it before but never needed it. _____
It seemed like a good place to start. _____
Other (Please specify.) _____

_____

8. What was your question or request? (Check one.)

Location of a known book. _____
Information on a subject. _____
Location of a facility in the library. _____
Other _____

What was the substance of your request?

9. What did the librarian do in response to your question? (Check all answers that apply.)

Told you where to look. _____
Went with you to the source. _____
Showed you how to find answer. _____
Found the answer for you. _____
Referred you to another person or place. _____
Other (Please specify.) _____

---

10. Would you be able to answer a similar question for yourself next time?

yes _____
no _____
undecided _____

If no or undecided, why? (Check all answers that apply.)

I would not know where to look. _____
I did not learn how to use the source(s) consulted. _____
I'll never have another question like it. _____
The search was too complicated. _____
Finding the answer was just a lucky break. _____
Other (Please specify.) _____

---

11. Did the librarian understand your question? yes _____ no _____

12. My question was answered to my (Circle the most appropriate number on the scale below.)

complete satisfaction 5 4 3 2 1 complete dissatisfaction

The library does not have the resources to answer my question. (Check one.)

agree _____
disagree _____
don't know _____

13. Would you return to the reference desk for information in the future?

yes (If yes, check here & answer only "a" below.) _____
no (If no, check here & answer only "b" below.) _____
undecided (If undecided, check here & answer only "c") _____

a. Why would you return? (Check all that apply.)

My question was answered. _____
It was a pleasant experience. _____
It's the only place I know to go. _____
Other (Please specify.) _____

Comments:

b. Why would you not return? (Check all that apply.)

My question was not answered. _____
It was an unpleasant experience. _____
Other (Please specify.) _____

Comments:

c. Why are you undecided about returning to the reference desk in the future with your questions?

14. What was your general mood before you came to the library? (Circle the most appropriate number on the scale below.)

| good | 5 | 4 | indifferent 3 | 2 | 1 | bad |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

15. How was your mood changed as a result of your experience at the General Reference Desk? (Check one.)

for the better _____
for the worse _____
not at all _____

16. Did you have to wait in line for help? no _____
yes _____
how long? _____min.
how many were ahead of you? _____

17. Have you heard of the following services offered by the General Reference Division?
(Check on the left those you know of, and the right those you use or have used at least once.)

| know of: | | use: |
|---|---|---|
| _____ | telephone reference service | _____ |
| _____ | Oregonian index | _____ |
| _____ | telephone directories (U.S. & foreign) | _____ |
| _____ | college catalogs (U.S. & foreign) | _____ |

THANK YOU! Remember to place this in one of the boxes at the General Reference Desk or at one of the circulation desks as you leave the library.

# SURVEY OF PATRONS USING THE GENERAL REFERENCE DESK

A survey of services at the General Reference Desk of the University of Oregon Library is being conducted under the auspices of the University Faculty-Student Library Committee and with the permission of the General Reference Division Staff.

If you would like to see a copy of the results of this survey, please leave your name, address, and phone number on a separate sheet of paper in one of the boxes at the circulation or reference desks. All responses are completely anonymous.

DIRECTIONS: you have just consulted the General Reference Desk (1st floor). Would you answer the questions below on your experience. Please check the appropiate spaces and place the completed form in one of the boxes at the circulation or reference desks as you leave the library. If you have a question concerning any of the items, please feel free to ask me about it.

1. I am (Check one)

U of O Freshman _____
U of O Sophomore _____
U of O Junior _____
U of O Senior _____
U of O Grad Student _____

U of O Faculty _____
U of O Staff _____
Non UO Student _____
Non UO Faculty _____
Town Patron _____
Other (Please specify) _____

2. My major is _____

_____

3. I am (Check one) male _____
female _____

4. I have attended school (grade school, high school, vocational school, and college) for a total of (Check one)

0-12 years _____
13-16 years _____
17-20 years _____
21-24 years _____
25+ years _____

5. I am (Check one)

U.S. citizen _____
Other _____
(Please specify)

6. My year of birth is _____

7. Is this the first time that you have consulted the General Reference Desk?

no _____
Yes _____

If yes, what directed you to consult it today? (Check all that apply)

I read the signs above the desk. _____
I saw the staff behind the desk. _____
I saw people in line at the desk. _____
I knew about it before but never needed it. _____
It seemed like a good place to start. _____
Other (Please Specify) _____

_____

8. What was your question or request? (Check one)

Requested book from behind desk. _____
Information on a subject. _____
Location of a specific book. _____
Location of a facility in the library. _____
Other _____

What was the substance of your request?

9. What did the librarian do in response to your question? (Check all answers that apply)

Retrieved material from behind desk. _____
Told you where to look. _____
Went with you to the source. _____
Showed you how to find the answer. _____
Found the answer for you. _____
Referred you to another person or place. _____
Explained library policy. _____
Other (Please Specify) _____

10. Would you be able to answer a similar question for yourself next time?

yes _____
no _____
undecided _____

If no or undecided, why? (Check all answers that apply)

I would not know where to look. _____
I did not learn how to use the source(s) consulted. _____
I'll never have another question like it. _____
The search was too complicated. _____
Finding the answer was just a lucky break. _____
I might forget how to find the answer. _____
Other (Please specify) _____

11. Did the librarian understand your question? yes _____ no _____

12. My question was answered to my (Circle the most appropiate number on the scale below)

complete satisfaction 5 4 3 2 1 complete dissatisfaction

13. Would you return to the General Reference Desk for information in the future?

yes (If yes, check here & answer only "a" below) _____
no (If no, check here & answer only "b" below) _____
undecided (If undecided, check here & answer only "c") _____

a. Why would you return? (Check all answers that apply)
My question was answered. _____
It was a pleasant experience. _____
It's the only place I know to go. _____
Other (Please specify) _____

Comments:

b. Why would you not return? (Check all answers that apply)
The library does not have what I need. _____
My question was not answered. _____
It was an unpleasant experience. _____
Other (Please specify) _____

Comments:

c. Why are you undecided about returning to the General Reference Desk in the future with your questions?

14. What was your general mood before you came to the library? (Circle the most appropiate number on the scale below)

good 5 4 3 2 1 bad
indifferent

15. How was your mood changed as a result of your experience at the General Reference Desk? (Check one)
for the better _____
for the worse _____
not at all _____

16. Did you have to wait in line for help?
_____ no
_____ yes How long?_____min. How many were ahead of you_____

17. Have you heard of the following services offered by the General Reference Division? (Check on the left those you know of, and check on the right those you use or haved used at least once)

| Know of: | | Use: |
|---|---|---|
| _____ | telephone reference service | _____ |
| _____ | Ohionian index | _____ |
| _____ | telephone directories (U.S. & foreign) | _____ |
| _____ | college catalogs (U.S. & foreign) | _____ |

18. Any comments you would like to make concerning the reference service received today would be welcome on the back of this sheet.

THANK YOU! Remember to place this in one of the boxes at the circulation or General Reference Desks as you leave the library.

# REFERENCE SURVEY - CHECKLIST FOR OBSERVATION

_____ Date _____ Hour _____ Observer

No. of workers: _____ prof. _____ student _____ intern

_____ desk work task(s)

_____ Appears to be reference question.

_____ Appears to be directional question.

_____ Staff initiates encounter

_____ Patron initiates encounter.

_____ Patron waits.

_____ Because others in line.

_____ Because staff away from desk.

_____ Because staff busy.

_____ Staff retrieves book from behind desk.

_____ Staff retrieves other material from behind desk.

_____ Staff consults book for patron at desk.

_____ Telephone rings.

_____ Staff makes phone call.

_____ Directs verbally to location in library.

_____ Gestures to location in library.

_____ Involves card catalog.

_____ Staff goes with patron.

_____ Patron returns after initial help.

_____ Number of people missed by staff.

REFERENCE SURVEY - INTERVIEW FOLLOWING OBSERVATION

_____ Date _____ Hour _____ Observer

1. What interesting thing happened at the reference desk over the last hour or two?

   1a. Was it also the most important thing you did during that time? Why or why not?

2. Did you feel that it was busier or slower than usual? Do you know why?

3. Did you encounter any difficulties?

   3a. What factors made more effective or less effective your work?

4. Any comments you would like to make.

# GENERAL REFERENCE DIVISION POLICY STATEMENT ON REFERENCE SERVICE

I. Purpose

A. As another "department" in an academic institution, the main purpose of the General Reference Division is to teach the patron how to find the answer to his question. Instructional opportunities include:

1. A formal course taught through the School of Librarianship.

2. Orientation programs during the first term of the school year.

3. Development of instructional signs providing basic information instruction in:

a. Location of books and periodicals.
b. Use of indexes.
c. Use of the card catalog.
d. Use of bibliographic and reference materials.

B. The secondary purpose is to locate information for patrons either by phone or in person.

II. Services

A. In addition to providing bibliographic and reference materials, the Division provides the following:

1. National and foreign newspapers, located in the Newspaper Room.

2. Interlibrary loans.

3. American and foreign college catalogs.

4. American and foreign telephone and city directories.

5. Indexing of the Oregonian and Emerald.

III. Patrons

A. Desk Patrons - The General Reference Division recognizes no distinction in types of patrons and provides services to anyone. While no distinction is made, it should be remembered that we do exist to serve the university community; local high school and elementary school students will receive what attention we can give at that particular moment.

(May, 1972)

B. Phone Patrons

Desk patrons take precedence over phone patrons. If things are too busy, the librarian should:

1. Take the request, name and number, and telephone back.
2. Ask the phone patron to call back.
3. Ask the patron to hold.

Long-distance phone calls, naturally, should be treated differently, based on the judgment of the librarian and the circumstances at the time.

Collect phone calls cannot be accepted.

IV. Questions

It is very important that the librarian understand the question which is being asked; language difficulties, improper use of terms, etc., contribute to the difficulty in understanding a question. Often it is helpful to have the patron write out his question.

A. Meanings, Spellings, Quotations, etc.

Even though the librarian may know the answer to these kinds of questions, it is usually safer to verify the answer in a source.

B. Law, Medicine, Consumer Ratings, Nutrient Content.

Answers to these questions should be read from their sources, with the titles and pages given.

C. Advice, Interpretations, Recommendations.

Advice may be given on such items as encyclopedias and dictionaries. Advice on law, medicine, etc., should not be given, with the statement added, "I'm not competent to provide such information."

By the same token, interpretations of subject matter, rules, laws, and explanations of college admissions policies, etc., cannot be provided by this department. The librarian must refer the question to the proper office.

If a student is seeking a recommendation on books for a certain course, it is best to refer him to his professor; we are unable to judge the content of a particular course.

We interpret the card catalog and the collection, but we are responsible for ordering for our division, only. The library's collection generally backs up the curriculum and research, but it cannot necessarily supply hobby and personal interest materials. If a patron wants a certain subject to be considered, he must be referred to the subject division librarian or head acquisition librarian.

D. Genealogy.

Reference librarians are not expected to do research in genealogy. A patron should be encouraged to come to the library to do his own searching. Librarians can give limited assistance, pointing out our genealogy guide books. Patrons who do not know how to do research should be referred to the Oregon Genealogical Society or to the Willamette Branch Library.

E. Bibliographic Information.

Requests asking if the library has a particular title may be answered, although we should not be expected to look up an excessive number of titles in the catalog. We do not have to go to the shelves to see if a book is there; however, we may give the patron the call number so that he can call the Circulation Desk.

Bibliographic information should be verified in a standard source before a patron is told we do not have a certain work. When it seems possible, the patron should be asked to verify, with guidance from the librarian. The librarian must use his judgment to decide whether verification would be wise. If the information is not supplied, the answer should be, "Using the information you have supplied, the library does not seem to have this work. Are you sure of your citation?"

F. Completion of the question.

It is assumed that the correct information will be provided the patron. If the librarian is unable to find the information, he should seek the assistance of his fellow workers who may have had some experience in the particular area. Referring the question to a particular subject specialist in the library should not be regarded as an indication of incompetence.

If the patron is to return later for his information, the information should be left on the clipboard at the desk with clear instructions on it. Any unanswered questions might also be left on the clipboard for help from other librarians.

V. Desk Work.

The librarian may, and should do work while on desk duty, but never to the detriment of the main service of the desk. Such activities can include:

A. Special assigned responsibilities.

B. Acquaintance with new acquisitions.

C. Reviewing for selection.

D. Reading and reviewing the reference collection.

VI. Correspondence

We try to answer all written requests; immediate desk duties take precedence. If enough information is supplied, we will obtain an obituary from our newspapers. Genealogical searches are not made.

VII. Identification Requirements and Policy Statements.

It is necessary for anyone who checks out a book from our desk to show his identification card. It is best to explain this policy, along with other library policies with a positive, rather than negative statement.

VIII. Attitudes.

A. Towards patrons - maintaining an attitude of understanding and helpfulness is important. The person at the desk is often the initial link between the university community and the library: over one million volumes and 150 employees may be judged by one's public relations ability. It is important, therefore, that tensions from innumerable questions, ringing phones, and other pressures not be reflected in the transaction. Added to this:

1. No defensive reactions.
2. A sense of humor.
3. A lack of priggishness, prudishness and self-righteousness.

Always be prepared to go with the patron to the catalog; do not assume that he knows how to look up the item you've suggested he look up.

B. Towards co-workers - cooperation with, and communication between fellow staff members is a vital part of successful reference service. They will often provide a source of information perhaps unlearned or overlooked. New sources of information are welcomed, but one should use tact and judgment in interfering with another's transaction. Never imply to a patron that personnel at another desk are incompetent.

Try to keep noise at a minimum; personal conversations and phone calls should be kept at a minimum, also. Personal calls should be made on the inside phones.

(January, 1973)

Notes from interview with chairman, General Reference Division, relating to Developmental Guidelines for Reference Service.

1.0 Services

1.2 The service code is in the Staff Manual. Users may have access to it, but they must know that it is there. We do not post the code publicly since we feel that there is no purpose in publishing it for the general public. It is not mentioned in the film on the use of the library.

1.3 The staff meetings are frequent. It has been two years since we have had an overall review. Last year when we extended service to handicapped persons, we made a thorough survey of their needs. We try to get the material they need and have it ready for them to pick up at the desk.
We have no regularly scheduled review of service.
A nonuser survey for all the library would be helpful, but has more use for the public library. Teaching methods relate more to use of an academic library.

1.4 We get no feedback other than the general suggestion box.

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[Other points under service could be observed by the surveyors. The Reference Divisior conducts a service course in the use of the library, Lib. 127. It conducts tours of the library and is responsible for the signs leading patrons to the GRD. Bibliographical guides developed by the staff include the Oregonian index and the Emerald index. The Policy Statement of the GRD relates to referrals and cooperation among co-workers.]

2.0 Resources

2.1 The whole staff joins in selection of materials. The Main Library has canons of selection by which the reference division abides.

3.0 Environment

[The chairman was not interviewed on this aspect of the service. The surveyors note that the GRD is located opposite the card catalog for all the libraries, and is near the main entrance to the library. Carrels are provided close by. Since the U. of Oregon is a divisional library, the subject divisions serve as other points of service for library users.]

4.0 Personnel

4.1 Staffing patterns and hours do reflect somewhat the way students study. If a need for another person is perceived, we try to fill it. Sunday afternoons is the only time when we are shorthanded. We fill this slot on a rotation basis now. To staff double on the weekends would require another staff member.

4.2 A professional librarian is on duty all hours the library is open, except for extended hours during finals weekend each term.

5.0 Evaluation

5.1 The staff collects no user data.

5.2 No one staff member is assigned the responsibility for measurement and evaluation of reference service.

5.3 The staff does keep statistics but does not use most of them. The statistics kept include the number of questions answered, the number of searches of 15 minutes or more, and the number of books retrieved from behind the desk. Most of the statistics are not useful because they are too subjective. Staff members will forget to note the number of questions when we are busiest, etc. The number of searches conducted is sometimes a valuable statistic.
We can depend on a subjective appraisal of a particular source's use. The same is true for minor changes in staffing patterns. However, for rethinking staffing patterns, we keep statistics for awhile, make the changes, and drop the statistics. We did this a few years ago. Currently we are keeping statistics on how many questions we get on finding the call number of a book on the catalog card. (Surveyor's note: A recent library policy is to drop the typing in of the call number on the upper left-hand corner of the catalog card.)

# A COMMITMENT TO INFORMATION SERVICES:

## Developmental Guidelines

Prepared by the
Standards Committee
Reference and Adult Services
American Library Association
Submitted by Ruth W. White,
Chairman
March 1, 1975

# INTRODUCTION

The emergence of entirely new and sophisticated information retrieval systems has required rethinking of established concepts and methods of reference and information services. The institutional framework for those services becomes less important than the delivery of services of high quality. In addition, the increasing diversity of the user populations requires a change in the traditional modes of the delivery of information services, particularly in relation to cooperative endeavors and networking arrangements where back-up levels of information resource capability are provided.

The librarian/information specialist must be the intermediary or the negotiator for unlocking these multifarious information resources. This responsibility places the concept of good service on the ability of the librarian/information specialist to be an effective facilitator in this transaction. In all transactions the librarian/information specialist must be impartial and non-judgmental.

It is recognized that service strategies need to be designed that are more sophisticated and sensitive to the complex user patterns never known to our profession before. The guidelines for services reflect a suggested level of performance in meeting the needs of users in those institutions and agencies which need practical methods of procedure and self-evaluation for the delivery of information services.

The guidelines are directed to all those who have any responsibility for providing reference and information services, including the reference or information specialist, supervisors or department heads, administrators, educators, and trustees. In providing services, they shall consider the needs and interests of all users, including children, young adults, adults, people who do not come to a library/information center, and potential clients.

## SCOPE

Providing reference services in a library or information center[1] should be recognized as a critical responsibility in meeting the information needs of users and prospective users. It should be organized to provide, as appropriate, for the coordinated access to the information resources existing within an area or a given field of endeavor.

Since all functions of a library or information center should be viewed, in ultimate terms, as facilitating the transfer of information, the distinguishing feature of reference services is that it specifically ensures the optimum uses of information resources through substantive interaction with the users on direct and indirect levels cited below.

A. Reference or information services consist of personal assistance provided to users in pursuit of information. The character and extent of such services will vary with the kind of library or information center, with the user the institution is designed to serve, with the skill, competence, and professional training of the librarian/information specialist providing the service, and with the resources available both inside and outside the institutional framework to which the user has come. This service may range from answering an apparently simple query to supplying information based on a bibliographical search combining the librarian/information specialist's competence in information-handling techniques with competence in the subject of inquiry. The feature of information service, irrespective of its level or its intensity, is to provide an end-product in terms of information sought by the user.

B. Formal and informal instruction in the use of the library or information center and its resources may range from the explanation of the use of the bibliographical aids (e.g., catalogs, information data bases, traditional reference works) to more formal assistance through interpretative tours and lectures designed to provide guidance and direction in the pursuit of information, rather than providing the information itself to users.

C. Indirect reference service reflects user access to a wide range of informational sources (e.g., bibliographies, indexes, information data bases) and may be the extension of the library's information service potential through cooperation with other library or information centers. This type of service recognizes the key role of interlibrary and interagency cooperation to provide adequate information service to users.

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[1] The term information center in this document includes any service point from which a user or prospective user may seek information of any level or type through direct or electronic means. Information services is a term used in the guidelines to include all traditional reference and information services and to be the broadest term possible.

## DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDELINES

1.0 Services

1.1 Reference or information services are to be developed not only to meet user needs and to improve present services but to anticipate user needs and demands.

1.2 A published service code with stated objectives is to be used to carry out information services and is to be available to all users. The code is to detail the circumstances under which services and resources are to be offered, the extent to which they are to be provided, any limitation on their provision, and to whom and by whom such services are to be provided. (See Appendix A for a sample draft outline.)

1.3 Reference or information services are to be reviewed at regular intervals to identify those individuals who are and are not being served and to determine how individuals not utilizing such services can be reached.

1.4 Provision is to be made for continuous feedback from users concerning their satisfaction with services and success in locating information.

1.5 A specific plan for the instruction of individuals in the use of information aids is to be developed and coordinated among all types of libraries, information centers or units of library activity.

1.6 Bibliographical and other informational access guides are to be developed by librarians/information specialists as an active "alert" service signifying the potential of the information resource base available to users.

1.7 Access to reference or information services is to be promoted and provided in adaptable settings, including person-to-person contact, correspondence, and/or through other communication media.

1.8 Formal cooperation among other information handling units, centers or agencies at local, regional, State, and national levels is essential to provide for the needs of all users and potential users.

1.9 Referrals to other sources and agencies are to be a standard level of information service operation. The effectiveness of these referrals should be evaluated at selected intervals to determine the effectiveness of the delivery service and the quality of the response to the user.

2.0 Resources

2.1 A selection policy is to be developed which addresses the needs and anticipated needs of the user and reflects the available resources to the user within an accessible area. Consideration should be given to a cooperative selection policy within a given service area.

2.2 Materials are to be added which reflect a diversity in format, levels of information service activity (e.g., general information service, resource back-up and research capability), and known user patterns of the past.

2.3 Frequently used materials are to be available in multiple copies in order to address user demands more quickly.

2.4 All information materials are to be examined regularly for condition, usefulness and currency, and either retained, discarded or replaced.

3.0 Environment

3.1 The importance of information services requires that service points be as near as possible to the main focal point of activity in the library or information center. In some instances, this will be near the main entrance.

3.2 The reference or information collection should be situated so that it is near an open area where access allows for quick and effective service.

3.3 Individual carrels or other provisions for quiet concentrated study are to be available for users of the reference or information collection.

3.4 The main reference or information area is to be situated so that the necessary conversation between library users and librarians/information specialists is not disturbing to others.

3.5 Additional service points are to be located so that access to librarians/information specialists is available throughout the library with communication equipment and techniques provided when appropriate.

4.0 Personnel

4.1 Staffing patterns and hours open are to reflect directly the needs of the users.

4.2 A professional librarian/information specialist should be available to users during all hours the library is open.

4.3 The reference or information staff is to promote actively the use of all library services. This should be done by whatever means are appropriate to the institutional setting, e.g., canvassing a public library area to offer assistance.

4.4 When staff size permits, individual librarians/information specialists should have training in specific subject fields.

4.5 Staff members are to be chosen with consideration given not only to their academic background and knowledge, but also to their ability to communicate easily with people.

4.6 Continuing education of the librarian/information specialist is basic to professional growth and is the responsibility of the individual, the institution, and the policy making body of the institution.

5.0 Evaluation

5.1 User data are to be collected on a regular basis to determine effectiveness of information service patterns. This implies the budgeting for such analysis through user surveys and other analytic measures.

5.2 The measurement and evaluation of reference or information services should be the responsibility of one or more staff members with some skills in this field.

5.3 Statistics are to be collected on a systematic basis for use in evaluation, policy decision, reports, and in budget preparation.

# DRAFT OUTLINE OF INFORMATION SERVICE POLICY MANUAL

I. Introduction
   A. Nature of Information Service
   B. Statement of objectives
   C. Purpose of the policy manual
      1. Guidance
      2. Standards

II. Types of Service
   A. General Statement
   B. List of Services
      1. Information Service at Desk
         a. Information service - answers to specific questions, statistics, biographies, etc.
         b. Instruction in the use of the library - how to use the card catalog, periodical indexes, bibliographies, services, etc.
         c. Bibliographic verification of items in the library or not in the library - including assistance in obtaining items by purchase, copy or loan of items not in the collection.
         d. Instruction in methodology and bibliography. How to do a literature search, how to bibliographically cite a publication or article.
         e. Assistance in locating library material.
      2. Interlibrary service
         a. Borrowing
         b. Lending
         c. Answering inquiries from other libraries
      3. Bibliographic Service
         a. Bibliographies
         b. Demand bibliographies
         c. Current awareness services
      4. Correspondence - answering inquiries from individuals
      5. Document Service
      6. Orientation and Instructional Services

III. Library Users
   A. General Statement
   B. Categories of Users

IV. Priorities

V. Desk Service Policies and Instructions
   A. General Guidelines for Desk Duty
      1. Nature and extent of responsibilities
      2. Guidelines for handling inquiries
         a. General inquiries
         b. Problem inquiries
      3. Behavior and attitudes
         a. Approachability
         b. Mobility
      4. Recording statistics and questions
      5. Reporting problems

B. General instructions for Information Assistants on Desk Duties (Limitations concerning responsibilities outlined in Section I).
C. Telephone
  1. Incoming Calls
    a. General guidelines (Time involved in answering phone, priority to user in building, etc.)
    b. Paging patrons
    c. Checking public catalog
    d. Circulation inquiries (checking shelf for material)
    e. General library information (switch-board function)
    f. Personal calls
    g. Emergency and nuisance calls
  2. Outgoing calls
    a. General guidelines for making calls
    b. Patron use of the telephone
    c. Personal calls
D. Circulation functions of Information Staff
  1. Reference books and other restricted materials
    a. Reference collection
    b. Stack Reference
    c. Archives
  2. Authorizing extended loans of periodicals
  3. Documents
  4. Vertical file
  5. Microforms
  6. Unprocessed materials
E. Responsibility for service at nights on weekend, and during skeleton coverage
  1. Public Service areas
  2. Closed area
F. Inquiries for "In Process" materials
G. Referrals
  1. Information
  2. Other libraries and services
H. "Special Information Collections"
  1. Document
  2. Microforms
  3. Archives
  4. Vertical file
I. Card catalog service
  1. Inquiries
  2. Surveillance of user at catalog
J. Questions for exams, quizzes, puzzles
K. Genealogical questions

VI. Interlibrary Loan Service

VII. Bibliographic Services
A. Reference initiated
B. Users' requests
  1. Individuals
  2. Courses
  3. Administrative staff
C. Current awareness services

VIII. Information Correspondence
  A. Incoming
    1. General Information
    2. Bibliographical information (holdings)
    3. Surveys
  B. Outgoing
    1. Preparation and review of replies
    2. Letters of introduction
IX. Document services
X. Orientation and Instructional Services

# SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS
## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. I am (Check one)

| | |
|---|---|
| U of O Freshman | 17 |
| U of O Sophomore | 13 |
| U of O Junior | 29 |
| U of O Senior | 30 |
| U of O Grad Student | 44 |
| U of O Faculty | 4 |
| U of O Staff | 1 |
| Non UO Student | 13 |
| Non UO Faculty | 0 |
| Town Patron | 15 |
| Other | 1 |

2. My major is (See Appendix E.)

3. I am (Check one) male 83
female 80

4. I have attended school (grade school, high school, vocational school, and college) for a total of (Check one)

| | |
|---|---|
| 0-12 years | 11 |
| 13-16 years | 85 |
| 17-20 years | 52 |
| 21-24 years | 8 |
| 25+ years | 9 |

5. I am (Check one)

| | |
|---|---|
| U.S. citizen | 158 |
| Other | 3 |

6. My year of birth is. Tabulated as ages as follows:

| Age | Number responding |
|---|---|
| 17-24 | 95 |
| 25-30 | 42 |
| 31-40 | 19 |
| 41-50 | 4 |

---

7. Is this the first time that you have consulted the General Reference Desk?

| | |
|---|---|
| no | 141 |
| yes | 23 |

If yes, what directed you to consult it today? (Check all that apply.)

| | |
|---|---|
| I read the signs above the desk. | 6 |
| I saw the staff behind the desk. | 6 |
| I saw people in line at the desk. | 2 |
| I knew about it before but never needed it. | 10 |
| It seemed like a good place to start. | 10 |
| Other | 4 |

8. What was your question or request? (Check one)

| | |
|---|---|
| Requested book from behind desk. | 37 |
| Information on a subject. | 29 |
| Location of a specific book. | 54 |
| Location of a facility in the library. | 23 |
| Other | 18 |

8a. What was the substance of your request?

| | |
|---|---|
| request a book | 61 |
| information on catalog card | 7 |
| reference question | 41 |
| library policy question | 7 |
| return/borrow pencil | 3 |

9. What did the librarian do in response to your question? (Check all answers that apply)

| | |
|---|---|
| Retrieved material from behind desk. | 46 |
| Told you where to look. | 75 |
| Went with you to the source. | 37 |
| Showed you how to find the answer. | 40 |
| Found the answer for you. | 31 |
| Referred you to another person or place. | 31 |
| Explained library policy. | 7 |
| Other | 9 |

10. Would you be able to answer a similar question for yourself next time?

| | |
|---|---|
| yes | 17 |
| no | 121 |
| undecided | 14 |

If no or undecided, why? (Check all answers that apply.)

| | |
|---|---|
| I would not know where to look. | 9 |
| I did not learn how to use the source(s) consulted. | 0 |
| I'll never have another question like it. | 3 |
| The search was too complicated. | 2 |
| Finding the answer was just a lucky break. | 1 |
| I might forget how to find the answer. | 2 |
| Other | 12 |

11. Did the librarian understand your question? yes 161 no 2

12. My question was answered to my (Circle the most appropriate number on the scale below)

complete satisfaction 5 4 3 2 1 complete dissatisfaction
5 = 131; 4 = 21; 3 = 10; 2 = 0; 1 = 2

13. Would you return to the General Reference Desk for information in the future?

| | |
|---|---|
| yes (If yes, check here & answer only "a" below) | 159 |
| no (If no, check here & answer only "b" below) | 5 |
| undecided (If undecided, check here & answer only "c") | 1 |

13. a. Why would you return? (Check all answers that apply)

| | |
|---|---|
| My question was answered. | 119 |
| It was a pleasant experience. | 48 |
| It's the only place I know to go. | 44 |
| Other | 26 |

b. Why would you not return? (Check all answers that apply)

| | |
|---|---|
| The library does not have what I need. | 0 |
| My question was not answered. | 0 |
| It was an unpleasant experience. | 0 |
| Other | 1 |

c. Why are you undecided about returning to the General Reference Desk in the future with your questions? (No respondents)

14. What was your general mood before you came to the library? (Circle the most appropriate number on the scale below)

good 5 4 3 2 1 bad

5 = 44; 4 = 46; 3 = 55; 2 = 10; 1 = 6.

15. How was your mood changed as a result of your experience at the General Reference Desk? (Check one)

| | |
|---|---|
| for the better | 107 |
| for the worse | 8 |
| not at all | 46 |

16. Did you have to wait in line for help?

135 no

29 yes. How long? 1 to 5 min. How many were ahead of you? 1 to 5

17. Have you heard of the following services offered by the General Reference Division? (Check on the left those you know of, and check on the right those you use or have used at least once)

| Know of: | | Use: |
|---|---|---|
| 35 | telephone reference service | 18 |
| 42 | Oregonian index | 15 |
| 49 | telephone directories (U. S. & foreign) | 42 |
| 54 | college catalogs (U. S. & foreign) | 61 |

18. Any comments you would like to make concerning the reference service received today would be welcome on the back of this sheet.

Few comments. One positive to reference service; one, negative. Others did not pertain to reference service.

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS
## OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

| WEEKLY TOTALS | S | M | T | W | T | F | Per cent | Activity observed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 149 | 35 | 26 | 37 | 23 | 16 | 12 | 44.9% of 332 | Appears reference question. |
| 183 | 28 | 30 | 32 | 54 | 30 | 9 | 55.1% of 332 | Appears directional question. |
| 195 | 37 | 27 | 45 | 45 | 30 | 11 | 62.3% of 313 | Staff initiates encounter. |
| 118 | 21 | 22 | 24 | 27 | 14 | 10 | 37.7% of 313 | Patron initiates encounter. |
| 123 | 32 | 25 | 25 | 18 | 9 | 14 | 39.3% of 313 | Patron waits. |
| 86 | 22 | 20 | 20 | 13 | 6 | 5 | 27.5% of 313 | Because others in line. |
| 18 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5.8% of 313 | Because staff away from desk. |
| 23 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 7.3% of 313 | Because staff busy. |
| 68 | 10 | 11 | 15 | 18 | 10 | 4 | 20.5% of 332 | Staff retrieves book behind desk. |
| 14 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 4.2% of 332 | Staff retrieves other material. |
| 24 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 7.2% of 332 | Staff consults book for patron. |
| 59 | 9 | 5 | 12 | 14 | 5 | 14 | | Telephone rings. |
| 30 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 1 | 10 | | Staff makes phone call. |
| 129 | 28 | 16 | 24 | 36 | 18 | 7 | 38.9% of 332 | Directs verbally to location. |
| 79 | 17 | 6 | 19 | 25 | 9 | 3 | 23.8% of 332 | Gestures to location. |
| 46 | 5 | 14 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 13.9% of 332 | Involves card catalog. |
| 85 | 16 | 15 | 18 | 19 | 12 | 5 | 25.6% of 332 | Staff goes with patron. |
| 36 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 14 | 5 | 4 | 11.5% of 313 | Patron returns after initial help. |
| 16 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4.9% of 329 | Number of people missed by staff. |
| 313 | 58 | 49 | 69 | 72 | 44 | 21 | 95.1% of 329 | Total encounters by week & day. |

Conditions:
Sunday, 3-5p.m. 1 professional, 1 student on duty. fairly busy.
Monday, 6-8 p.m. 1 professional, 1 student on duty. routine.
Tuesday, 10-12 a.m. 3 professionals, 3 students, alternating. normal.
Wednesday, 1-3 p.m. 2 professionals, 1 intern on duty. busy.
Thursday, 8-10 p.m. 1 professional, 1 intern on duty. business brisk.
Friday, 8 - 10 a.m. 1 professional the first hour; 1 professional, 1 student the second hour. slow except for 1 spurt of activity.

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS
## INTERVIEW FOLLOWING OBSERVATION

1. What interesting thing happened at the reference desk over the last hour or two?
"Patron who had earlier ordered extensive research called to try to get another librarian to work on the same problem."
"User had a problem of a legal nature - very interesting, but he needed a lawyer and not a librarian.
"An unexpected tour of students arrived."
"The whole thing - not all dull questions."

Six of the interviews yielded no comments.

1a. Was it also the most important thing you did during that time? Why or why not?

| | |
|---|---|
| No | 3 |
| Yes | 1 |
| No answer | 6 |

2. Did you feel that it was busier or slower than usual? Do you know why?
"Brisk - end of term periodical index use."
"Normal - early morning is not a busy time."

Most of the staff said it was normal.

3. Did you encounter any difficulties?
"Trying to keep up with one patron's research question and 49 (count 'em) telephone calls simultaneously during a spurt of business."
"Couldn't find information on a little known author."
"Town patron needed more help than staff realized."
"Looking for beer, wine, soda pop consumption statistics for Oregon. It was in the Oregon Collection."
"The level of service required by the users was not one that stimulated me - nearly all were of ready reference type."
"Yes, guy to take pictures, someone wanted to get into the Catalog Department, and several questions of library policy."

3a. What factors made more effective or less effective your work?
"Not enough hands, feet, mouths, and brains."
"Staff ill."
"Pressure of appointment coming up."
"I was not very sharp from having waked at 4:00 a.m. Needed a sleep break rather than a coffee break."
"The haste with which some questions needed to be answered."

4. Any comments you would like to make.

All declined to make any further comments.

## COMPARISON OF REFERENCE USERS TO UNIVERSITY POPULATION

| | Library Reference Survey N = 167 | | University Population N = 14,922 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| BY STATUS (N=133) | | | | |
| Freshmen | 17 | 12.8 | 24 4 | 16.2 |
| Sophomo :s | 13 | 9.8 | 24 0 | 16.3 |
| Juniors | 29 | 21.8 | 2856 | 19.1 |
| Seniors | 30 | 22.5 | 3557 | 23.8 |
| Special | | | 98 | .7 |
| Graduate students | 44 | 33.1 | 3557 | 23.9 |
| BY SEX (N=163) | | | | |
| Male | 83 | 50.9 | 8724 | 58.5 |
| Female | 80 | 49.1 | 6198 | 41.5 |
| BY CITIZENSHIP (N=161) | | | | |
| U.S. | 158 | 98.1 | 14257 | 95.5 |
| Other | 3 | 1.8 | 665 | 4.5 |
| BY MAJOR (N=135) | | | | |
| Art, Architecture | 11 | 8.1 | 1544 | 10.0 |
| Business Ad. | 9 | 6.7 | 1782 | 12.0 |
| Education | 14 | 10.4 | 1421 | 9.0 |
| Health, Rec., P.E. | 9 | 6.7 | 982 | 6.0 |
| * Liberal Arts | 10 | 7.4 | 2310 | 15.0 |
| Literature & Lang. | 16 | 11.9 | 1044 | 7.0 |
| Social Sciences | 31 | 23.0 | 1137 | 8.0 |
| Sciences | 6 | 4.4 | 2638 | 18.0 |
| CSPA | 5 | 3.7 | 394 | 3.0 |
| Journalism | 8 | 5.9 | 592 | 4.0 |
| Library Science | 8 | 5.9 | 101 | 1.0 |
| Music | 6 | 4.4 | 373 | 3.0 |
| Law | 0 | 0.0 | 441 | 3.0 |
| Interdisciplinary, | 2 | 1.4 | 163 | 1.0 |

* Liberal Arts includes general undeclared.

Source for University Population: A Profile of Students at the University of Oregon, spring term 1975, fourth week. Student Characteristics, Course Enrollments. Reported by the Office of the Registrar. 71p.

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